

GED[®] Testing Service Research Quick Facts (2009)

1- General Information about GED Candidates

- In 2007, 14% of adults 16+ years old lacked a high school diploma/credential in the United States. Less than 2% of these adults take the GED Test each year. (*2008 GED Testing Program Statistical Report*)
- The yearly pass rate has ranged from 68% to 73% for the 2002 Series GED Test. In 2008, the pass rate was 76% for first-time completers and 50% for repeat-completers. (*GED Testing Program Statistical Reports*)
- In 2008, 16 years old candidates had the highest pass rate (83%) compared with other age groups; while candidates 60+ had the lowest pass rate (53%). Male candidates tended to have higher pass rates (76%) compared with females (69%). White candidates had the highest pass rate (83%) among all ethnic groups, while African- American candidates had the lowest pass rate (57%). (*2008 GED Testing Program Statistical Report*)
- Since the program's inception, the average highest grade completed has remained stable at the 10th grade. In 2008, GED candidates were on average 7.7 years out of school before testing. (*GED Testing Program Statistical Reports*)
- Since 1995, the average age of all GED candidates has remained relatively unchanged at 25 years. Since 2002, the percentage of young candidates aged 16 to 24 has decreased slightly from 68% to 64%. (*GED Testing Program Statistical Reports*)
- In 2008, GED completion and pass rates for candidates aged 16 to 19 were higher than those in the whole population of candidates, and very young examinees were also more likely to take the Official Practice Tests before testing. (Zhang & Patterson, 2008)

2- Economic and Labor Market Outcomes for GED Credential Recipients

- GED credential holders tend to have lower wages, earnings, and probability of employment than high school graduates (Cameron & Heckman, 1993). Song & Hsu (2008) further found that, with other variables controlled, GED recipients and high school graduates have comparable weekly wages but the latter have higher personal income.
- GED credential holders have higher wages and personal income than uncredentialed dropouts. (Boesel, Alsalam, & Thomas, 1998; Tyler, 2002; Song & Hsu, 2008, Tyler & Berk, 2008). However:
 - After accounting for years of school and cognitive skills, the wage and annual earnings advantages of GED holders over uncredentialed dropouts become smaller and often statistically insignificant. (Tyler, 2005; Tyler & Berk, 2008)
 - Economic benefits of the GED credential are mainly for adults with low cognitive skills; while higher skilled dropouts see fewer benefits from a GED credential. (Murnane, Willett, & Boudett, 1999; Murnane, Willett, & Tyler, 2000; Tyler, Murnane, & Willett, 2001; Clark & Jaeger, 2002; Heckman, Hsueh, & Rubinstein, 2000).
 - Economic benefits of the GED credential tend to accrue over time (about 5 years). (Tyler, Murnane, & Willett, 2000)
 - Non-cognitive skills actually explain more of the wage variation between GED recipients and high school graduates than cognitive skills do. (Bowles, Gintis, & Osborne, 2001)

3- Postsecondary Experiences and Outcomes for GED Candidates

- 98% of colleges and universities that require a high school diploma accept the GED credential (Annual Survey of Colleges 2007, The College Board)
- Almost 60% of test-takers cited educational reasons for taking the GED Tests, but many do not continue their education due to adverse life circumstances or other barriers (ACE, 2008; Maralani, 2006; Reder, 1999; Tyler, 2003). About 15 to 30% of GED recipients actually begin postsecondary education (CAEL, 2008; Maralani, 2006; Ou, 2008).
- Longitudinal and cross-sectional studies found that GED recipients are more likely to enroll in postsecondary education than dropouts (Murnane, Willett, & Boudett, 1997). According to NELS:88 data, 78% of high school graduates, 40% of GED credential holders, and 11% of uncredentialed dropouts have been in some kind of postsecondary education program by 1994. (Berkold, Geis, & Kaufman, 1998)
- GED recipients may tend to delay enrollment or to participate in a two-year (or less) program (Ou, 2008). They are more likely to be pursuing a certificate-granting program and to earn credits in vocational or technical courses. (Berkold, Geis, & Kaufman, 1998)

- 30% of the GED holders in the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) dataset (where 78% of the population are 30+) have some postsecondary education but no degree, and 8% have a bachelor's degree or higher. (Bauman & Ryan, 2001)
- In 2-year public colleges, young GED holders tend to need more remedial classes, but their academic course completion ratio and their average GPA are only slightly lower than those for average students. (Hamilton, 1998)
- GED holders tend to obtain postsecondary degrees later in life. (Bauman & Ryan, 2001)
- Few GED credential recipients complete the first year of postsecondary education or a degree program (Duke & Ganzglass, 2007; Murnane, Willett, & Tyler, 2000; NCAL, 2008; Reder, 1999; Tyler, 2003). GED holders tend to complete less postsecondary education than high school graduates do, but more than uncredentialed dropouts do. (Berkold, Geis, & Kaufman, 1998)
- Participants in postsecondary experiences tend to show modest increases in earnings (Georges, 2001; Lofstrum & Tyler, 2005; Murnane, Willett, & Boudett, 1999; Song & Hsu, 2008). The economic returns to each year of postsecondary education are about the same for both high school graduates and GED holders, regardless of their gender. (Murnane, Willett, & Tyler, 2000; Murnane, Willett, & Boudett, 1999; Boudett, 2000). However, another paper showed that among adults with postsecondary education, high school graduates earn about \$3,060 more annually in personal income than GED credential holders. (Song & Hsu, 2008)
- A study in a small 4-year college demonstrated that unlike ACT scores, GED Test scores are not reliable predictors of college grade point average. (Rose, 1999)

4- Other Noneconomic Outcomes for GED Credential Recipients

- GED holders have higher levels of political and social participation than uncredentialed dropouts and also are more involved in family literacy activities. However, they generally lag behind high school graduates except for obtaining information on public events. (Song & Hsu, 2008)
- GED holders report being in good health more than uncredentialed dropouts but less than high school graduates. Also, GED recipients are as likely to have health insurance as uncredentialed dropouts but lag behind high school graduates. (Song & Hsu, 2008; Ou, 2008)
- Compared with high school graduates, GED holders have higher rates of incarceration, arrest conviction, two or more births before age 20, and tobacco and severe substance use (Ou, 2008). Compared with uncredentialed dropouts, GED recipients have lower rates of depression symptoms (Ou, 2008) and lower rates of recidivism (Zgoba, Haugebrook, & Jenkins, 2008)

5- Literacy of GED Credential Recipients

- The literacy skill levels achieved by adults with a GED credential are similar to those achieved by high school graduates and higher than those achieved by uncredentialed dropouts, regardless of their demographic characteristics. (Hsu & George-Ezzelle, 2008)
- The literacy scores for GED credential recipients with disabilities (except hearing disability) are higher than those of uncredentialed dropouts with disabilities and are equivalent to literacy scores for adults with disabilities with a high school diploma. (Hsu & George-Ezzelle, 2008)

6- GED Candidate Computer-familiarity Survey

- According to a GEDTS survey, 68% of GED candidates who tested in 2004 *would have preferred* to test with a computer-based format if it had been available when they tested. 96% *would have taken the GED Test* if it had been available only in a computer-based format when they tested. (George-Ezzelle & Hsu, 2006)